

# The Impresario.

A Monthly Magazine Devoted to Music, Literature, and Art.

VOL. I.

ST. LOUIS, AUGUST, 1872.

NO. 6.

## PAGANINI.

NICOLÒ PAGANINI, the most extraordinary violinist that ever lived, was born at Genoa, on the 18th of February, 1781. His father, named Antonio, a commission merchant, was a great amateur of music, and played with no little skill both guitar and mandoline. It was he that became Nicolo's first instructor, and proved to be the severest and most exacting task master of the child. His singular talents showed themselves at a very early age, for he was scarcely six years old when he executed violin solos in the various churches of his native city, and already in his ninth year made his first appearance at the theatre. Two things contributed especially to work upon his imagination and excite his ambition, as well as strengthen his confidence in his powers.

These were the impressions made on him by Mozart's early triumphs in his art, and the commutation of his mother's vision in his regard. "Dear child," said she to him one morning, "you will turn out a great artist, for last night an angel appeared to me and bade me make any request I desired and he would fulfill it; I begged him to make you the greatest violinist the world ever saw." To many this may seem incredible; however, whether true or invented, Paganini certainly became the celebrity of his day. Additional instruction given him by Alessandro Rolla, of Parma, in the handling of the instrument, and in composition by Ghiretti, fitted him for his first artistic tour. But in his sixteenth year he visited *Luca*, where a musical festival, given on St. Martin's day annually, attracted immense crowds of strangers. This proved the beginning of his fame in Italy. Unhappily, he contracted at this time an invincible passion for the play at hazards, and his independence of fortune was of short duration. From *Luca* he went to Pisa, but everywhere he indulged this destructive passion, and often in a single night he would gamble away the proceeds of many concerts; sometimes even he would pawn his violin, so as to be obliged to go to the lovers of his art and borrow an instrument. Placed in a similar predicament, a merchant of Livorno had lent him an excellent violin, and when Paganini came to return it on the next morning, the owner refused to accept it, saying, "I'll take good care not to desecrate the strings which your fingers have touched; the violin is yours." This was the instrument on which he loved best to play, and it became likewise the happy means of his abandoning the gambling table.

In later years he often narrated the fact him-

self in the following terms: "I shall never forget how I was placed in that position, which became the turning-point of my life. The Prince of L— cherished the hope of purchasing my excellent violin, the only one which I then had, and which I still possess. He asked me, on one occasion, to determine the price. I had no desire to part with the instrument, and demanded two hundred and fifty Napoleons d'or. Shortly after, the Prince called on me and said, 'You certainly jested about the price of your much valued violin, for I will give you 2,000 francs for it.' I was just then in very embarrassed circumstances, as I had sustained heavy losses the previous night, and I was half determined to give up my violin, when a friend called me away to another game at hazards. All my capital did not exceed thirty francs. My watch, rings and jewelry were already gone. I resolved at once to stake my last cash, and if fortune proved adverse, to exchange my violin for the generous and princely offer and depart instantly, without instrument or baggage, for St. Petersburg. My thirty pieces of silver were soon reduced to only three, and I imagined myself already on the way to the Russian capital, when suddenly my good star returned. I won 150 francs, saw the danger I had recklessly exposed myself to, and from that hour I never played at the gambling table again."

In the midst of the success that richly attended him, he suddenly conceived an aversion for the violin, he left it untouched for four years, and cultivated the insipid guitar. But finally, at the end of this period, he resumed the violin practice, and began anew his travels. In the opening of the year 1805 he created great enthusiasm at *Luca*, and soon obtained the position of solo-violinist at court. During his residence in this city he showed a decided preference for the G string, and worked perseveringly to discover its many advantages and powers.

About this time, too, he wrote a duo for tenor and soprano, which he executed on the *G* and *E* strings, and which he entitled *Scena Amorosa*. When he played this composition in presence of the Princess Elisa Bacciochi, she remarked to him, "Since you perform so beautifully on two strings, perhaps even one string would suffice for your talent." He actually wrote several sonatas, called *Napoleon*, for the *G* string alone. However, it must be observed that, even when a boy, he worked to produce new effects, and labored industriously at the solution of passage-problems seemingly incapable of rendition. By constant application and most persevering self-devotion he acquired the technical skill which since his day has never been attained.

In the summer of 1808 he left *Luca*, and for

nineteen years he traveled through Italy, suddenly appearing in a city and creating a sensation, and as suddenly disappearing to idly away his time in some obscure nook. In this manner he lived in Bologna, Rome, Milan, Venice and Naples, now rising to the surface by the brilliant triumphs he achieved over every competitor, now sinking listlessly back into an inglorious obscurity. The year 1827 was spent in Rome, where the Pope created him a Knight of the Order of Golden Spurs. He left Italy the ensuing year, and electrified Vienna, traveled through Germany, and in 1831 he arrived in Paris, where he gave his first concert at the Grand Opera House. The people grew wild with enthusiasm at all his concerts. The same unrivaled success attended him in England, Scotland and Ireland, as well as in the French Provinces and the Netherlands. He returned to Italy in 1834 a man of fortune, bought the "Villa Gajona," and lived either in this charming retreat or in the cities of Genoa or Milan.

But the shattered state of his health allowed him only a short time for the wearing of his laurels. The irregularities and excesses of his youth, and the use of patent medicines which he applied to cure the most opposite evils, had completely ruined his constitution. Besides this, consumption was fast undermining his remaining strength, until in the month of May, 1840, he became the victim of a complication of diseases.

There is no doubt that he was a wonderful artist and an original character at the same time. Everything about him, his talents, frame, face, movements and mode of life, savored of mysteriousness, and often inspired dread and terror. On this account it is not to be wondered at that most sketches of his life fell little short of fiction, interwoven, as they were, with so many incredible stories, into which the spirit world largely entered. True, his haggard countenance and sallow cheeks set in a frame of flowing black hair, his sharp features and dimmed eyes, his ghastly smile and uncertain, staggering gait, all conspired to excite sympathy, mixed with an unearthly fear, at his approach; but no sooner did his bow sweep the strings than his attitude and mien underwent an entire change. He was no longer an object of pity, but, on the contrary, of the highest admiration. He seemed a man again in the prime of life. His cheeks glowed, and indicated that his soul spoke only in the exercise of his art. With a nervous grasp he clutched the finger-board, while his bow, like a flash, sped over the strings.

His biographers relate that, from an extravagant and reckless young man, from one wholly ignorant of the uses and value of money, he







the reputation already of being one of the most accomplished women on the American stage. Her seclusion will be of only eighteen months' duration.

It is strange that the wives of all eminent composers of our times have little or no taste for music. Mme. Offenbach says she detests music. Mme. Verdi never goes to the opera. Mme. Gounod is a devout member of the Church, and thinks her husband did very wrong to compose anything for the stage. Mme. Strauss is an excellent cantatrice, but has steadily refused to sing in public since she was married.

### MUSICAL MELANGE.

Marshall Vaillant, deceased, has left £300 to the Conservatoire of his native town, Dijon.

A collection of old Flemish songs, edited by M. Gevaert, is in course of publication at Brussels.

The Dclassements Comiques, which was burnt down by the Communists, will not be rebuilt as a playhouse.

The opera "Diana von Salange," composed by Duke Ernst, of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, has been produced with considerable success at Leipzig.

Offenbach has signed a contract for the production of a new opera in Paris for the winter of 1873. Labiche and Gille are to write the Libretto.

The leader of an orchestra at Richmond, Va., claims to be a descendant of Oliver Cromwell.

While but three female reporters attended the performance of the Jubilee of 1869, fourteen represented prominent papers at the recent hullabaloo.

The western idea of happiness is to be able to sit on the edge of one's grave and whistle the "Arkansas Traveler."

Strauss is said to be worth nearly a million dollars.

Marie Sasse is the reigning star of opera in Paris this season.

The Nestor of the violoncellists, M. Van Gelder, is in Brussels, and was heard recently at a private concert. He is now 85 years old.

The first opera written by a Turk for Turks had lately been finished by Hassim Pascha, and was called "Mohammed and his Creditors."

M. Chouquet is preparing for publication a catalogue of the Museum of Musical Instruments belonging to the Paris Conservatoire.

Gilmore's friends are going to give him a gold baton.

Schneider is in London again at the St. James Theatre.

Vieuxtemps, the violinist, has been appointed professor at the Ecole Royal of Music at Brussels.

Miss Lina Edwin is the manageress of the Queen's Theatre, Dublin.

Madame Rudersdorff, Miss Alice Fairman and Miss Teresa Liebe visit America in the fall.

Miss Matilda Phillips, a younger sister of the favorite American contralto, lately "debuted" at Milan in "Cenerentola."

The Lucca season of Italian opera, under Maretzek's management, will begin in New York in the latter part of September.

The proposed concert tour of Madame Arabella Goddard in the United States this season will probably be postponed for a year.

This month will bring back to the Eastern States the favorite pianist, Anna Mehlig, who has been having a most successful concert season in California and Oregon.

Matilda Phillips the younger sister of Adelaide, was to make her debut in opera at Milan, Italy, on the 22d of June. Brignoli has been singing in concert with Miss Nilsson and Mr. Sanley.

Cherubini's opera, "Les Deux Journées," a work which has not been seen on the stage for a long while, has very recently been brought out at Her Majesty's, in London. It had only a partial success.

A German paper states that Joachim, the greatest violinist, and Anton Rubenstein will visit the United States together. Grau made the engagement.

Until a few years ago nearly all composers ruled their music paper with a small ruler, which was filled with ink. Too much trouble in our times.

Strauss calls Boston "juristical, stupid and dull."

Arabella Goddard has apprenticed her son to the dry goods business in Boston.

The *Musik Zeitung*, of Leipzig, reports that up to July 1 forty five Americans had reserved seats for the Wagner opera performance at Bayreuth. The price is three hundred thalers for the season.

Madame Peschka-Leutner is said to have been the daughter of a poor cigar-maker, and appeared first in public singing in the streets of Vienna with an itinerant hand-organ player.

At St. Petersburg Mlle Patti receives 40,000 francs, Mlle Nilsson 35,000 francs, to sing for one month next winter.

Messrs. Jarrett and Maretzek have engaged the greatest baritone living—Faure—for the season of 1873-74, for America.

Mozart's complete sonatas are sold at about twenty-five cents gold in Germany. Ten years ago they were sold at \$15.

The audience of the San Carlo, at Naples, having opposed strongly the performance of a work which they disliked, called upon the Impressario to withdraw it, and, on his refusal, began an opposition of a kind peculiar to the Neapolitan audiences. The King of Italy was present, and ordered the police to stop the representation. Peace reigns again at the San Carlo.

Notable among the notabilities of a season that have been collected together at Geneva this year is Ralph Keeler, the prince of American Bohemians—the man who, in America, has been in turn canal-bait driver, negro minstrel and writer of high repute in the *Atlantic Monthly*—who has tramped all over Europe, paying his way by playing on his banjo, as Goldsmith long before paid his way by the notes of his flute, and who crowned all this rich experience by taking a degree at the Heidelberg University. Keeler is now in the service of the Harpers of New York, and is "doing up" for their monthly with pen and pencil the Swiss and German watering-places.

### THE SOUTH ST. LOUIS.

MRS. Laura S. Webb, an accomplished lady and popular poetess, sends us the *South St. Louis*, a paper edited and published by her in what was till recently known as Carondelet. Its motto is a good one: "No South, no North—but one St. Louis." The reading matter is fresh and spicy, while a fair showing of advertisements speaks well for the pecuniary success of the paper. We wish it all prosperity.

*An English Husband Entertains his Sick Wife with the "Dead March in Saul."*

A MUSICIAN at Huddersfield has just been sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment for various little domestic offences, including the performance of the "Dead March in Saul" over his wife during a severe illness. This gentleman was remarkable not only for his love of music, but also for his peculiarly playful disposition, for when any of the neighbors interfered to protect his family from ill treatment, he was in the habit of stoning them, and if bidding them "stand their mark." He seems to have undergone no little suffering, owing to the populace being unable to understand his temperament, and a few days before he was taken into captivity he was with difficulty rescued by the police from a mob who desired to lynch him. Yet, although at first sight it seemed a mistake for a husband and when requested by his wife to run for a doctor to play the "Dead March in Saul" by her bedside instead of seeking medical assistance, it must not be forgotten that some of our best English writers have lent their sanction to this course of proceeding. For instance, Keats says, "Let me have music dying, and I seek no more delight." Again, Milton remarks, "I was all ear, and took in strains that might create a soul under the ribs of death." And Carlyle speaks of music as "a kind of inarticulate, unfathomable speech which leads to the edge of the infinite, and lets us for a moment gaze into that."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

The prizes intended for distribution among the subscribers of the Art Union of Great Britain, were drawn for in the large gallery of the Exhibition of Works of British Artists, Oxford street, Manchester, on Saturday, June 29. Fifty-five thousand two hundred and fifty-seven tickets were reported sold, at one shilling each, and one thousand prizes were allotted to the subscribers.





